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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

The period of of mourning has begun - I've run out of turkey leftovers!
Next year I get a bigger bird, more leftovers. I hope that everyone had a
terrific Thanksgiving holiday. Now the next holiday madness begins.

With the holiday last week, it's taken me a little more time to get caught
up than usual. I was planning to start a few reminiscient commentaries,
dealing with the "good old days" of the Atari experience. I was considering
going back through some of the A-ONE and STReport archives and re-print some
of our old editorials, stories reflecting some of the many AtariFest
experiences, and a few other ideas. It's obvious that we can never go back
to those "glory days" that we once lived with regard to our Atari
experiences, but it may be interesting to remember some of the events that
occurred during those times. If you have some fond memories that you'd like
to write about and share with our readers, please feel free to send them to
me.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, I've had a week to come out of my
turkey coma, and I'm almost back to normal after last week's huge
Thanksgiving Day meal(s).

I've still got a refrigerator full of leftovers, but there's more room in
there now than there was a few days ago, so I guess I'm making progress.
<Grin>

Someone mentioned to me in email that I made it sound like I did the
cooking. Well, I do on holidays. My wife has always been afraid of
screwing up the "big meals", so she takes the day-to-day meals and I'm
in charge of... oh, how can I put it... all meals with meat products

that weigh more than a quarter pound before cooking. <chuckle>

So as I sit here wondering how long it's going to take me to shake off the rest of my tryptophan stupor, it occurs to me that I'm incredibly lucky. Lucky that I'm happy and relatively healthy, lucky that I'm where I am, lucky that I'm WHEN I am.

Yeah, I know... I'm not usually known for being upbeat and positive, but let's face it... I could have been born in Jamestown (the first permanent settlement in the new world) in the early 17th century... and how would I have recharged my laptop batteries THEN? <chuckle>

You see? It's all in how you look at things. Sure, it might have been cool and incredibly exciting to live during the time that the new world was being colonized, but it wouldn't have been easy. There was hunger and disease, there was the threat of attack from natives or from Mother Nature, and there were probably dozens of dangers that you and I can't even imagine today.

It's just human nature to want to be the first, to be the pioneer, to be the trail-blazer. But the fact is that they've got the hardest, most thankless part of the job. Sure, there's something to be said for being the first to see the moon rise over a never-before-seen river, or to be the first to feel the hum and vibration as you break the sound barrier, or the first to see the earth rise over the horizon of the moon, but let's face it kids, none of those things were a walk in the park when they first happened. Sure I'd love to do any of those things, but I'm perfectly happy to let someone else work the kinks out first. <grin>

I have no idea whatsoever of what this might have to do with Atari computers, but we were the trailblazers at one time, weren't we? Hell, telecommunicating and sharing ideas like we were in a science fiction movie or something, we were the pioneers... yep, it was us that learned about modems and protocols and downloading. And it was us who turned around and showed the next 'crop'.

Yes, I can still remember the days of the 110 baud modem and dialing it with peek and poke commands. I can remember when revolutions like xmodem and ARC made downloads easier, and when ASCII graphics really could look like a large Charlie Brown or Snoopy.

The difference between me and the Jamestown gang is that I didn't have to face starvation or disease (not even computer viruses) or natives in a murderous rage because a large portion of their population was wiped out by the small pox that we brought with us. And as a huge plus, I got to move on along with everyone else... DSL lines, AGP graphics, DVD-ROMs, whatever.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Djordje Vukovic posts this about TeraDesk:

"Version 3.42 of TeraDesk open-source desktop is available at:

<http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm>

This is a non-critical code-optimisation release; program size has been reduced a bit, there is an improvement in speed of some operations, and several small corrections/improvements were made which were overlooked in the last release, and should be mostly invisible to the user. See the history file for details."

'Chris' asks about a RAM fault on his two STEs:

"I have 2 STE's both with the same problem, and thats there's no databus coming from U401 to the RAM area, all address bus and all the ras/cas lines are fine but no databus at all. I've changed the big IC 401, which is called GSTSHFTR 3 times, it has clock input and power, but apart from that I'm out of ideas, I've also changed the CPU and blitter just in case. only IC left is the surface mount big un, I assume its to blame but can't prove it, also out of ideas. looks like a scraper."

Steve Sweet asks Chris:

"Have you tried replacement simms, or at least swapping your about to eliminate a faulty device."

Chris tells Steve:

"Simms are tested on another machine, but is somewhat irrelevant since there is no drive to the ram databus, rather confusing, I prefer the STFM, at least you could change more chips!"

Sam F. asks about MiNT:

"What's the easiest way to install a fairly simple Mint install?"

Coda tells Sam:

"Thats a good post there, but I gotta mention the one thing that has been overlooked, and that is that you can have a MiNT setup without having to have a Unix partition/unix tools installed. Sure you lose some power and a lot of benefits that way, but maybe Sam F just wants to have the benefits of a fast multitasking OS, without the "scariness" and complexities of a unix console (especially if he has no unix experience at all). He mentions wanting to run MyAes and Thing, which is so easy to do if he just gets the new 1-16-1 FreeMint kernel (which now comes with XAAES as a kernel module (Much improved!)) then he can add MyAes and Thing at a later date. I am testing the latest Teradesk, which is free, and it is getting better all the time."

Mark Duckworth adds:

"Pretty self-explanatory.... Easymint. Hardest part about it is making sure you have a properly setup RAW partition. Follow the documentation and use HD-Driver to do this."

Sam asks Mark:

"Easymint is kind of an installer for mint correct? So, I can use easymint to install 1.16.1 and MyAes?"

Brian Roland tells Sam:

"Wrong.
Easymint is a distribution based on the SpareMiNT projects.

1. What is MiNT?

MiNT is a preemptive multi-tasking kernel initially designed for 16bit atari machines. It tries to be as 'posix' compliant as possible, therefore it is targeted ultimately to be kernel for a 'unix' workstation. You don't necessarily have to install or use anything Unix to get benefits from a MiNT kernel. Since you asked about EasyMiNT however...please read on.

If you've no idea what unix is and intend to try out EasyMiNT, then I suggest you use your favorite search engine to read the basic overview on what unix is before you go any further here.

While you are studying, find some quick cheats on the net that will teach you basics (print your favorite screen based text editor's manual out...it'll really come in handy) on the following shells and a text editors.

Shells: sh, tcsh, bash
Common Screen Based Text Editors: pico, vi, emacs.

2. What is a shell?

In the unix world...a shell is your basic command prompt, or user interface. EasyMiNT comes with a variety of shells you can use ultimately...tho' early on it is going to use the smallest and simplest one out there...called sh. Remember, a lot of Atari machines max out at 4meg of memory :)

3. What is SpareMint?

Think of SpareMiNT as a public library where you can go to check out books (rpm files). With the proper password, you can even change or add new books to this library to share with the SpareMiNT community.

SpareMiNT is a project where kernels, drivers, utilities, etc...that have been, or are supported for MiNT are collected (when it is legal to do so) in the form of source and binary installable-distributions (we call a distribution an rpm, and sometimes less smart distributions come in something called tar-balls). As a user, you can download the latest ports of various MiNT/unix utilities in source and or binary form (again, via rpm or tar file), install them, and have a neat little log of what you've done during installation and since. If you do any coding yourself...you can upload your bug reports/fixes, notes, changes, additions, etc...to the SpareMiNT project. In essence....SpareMiNT is a support community.

4. What is EasyMiNT?

It is a distribution with some instructions, tutorials, scripts and the necessary binaries to get you started with a unix work station based on MiNT. Most if not all of this package is based on the SpareMiNT project. Note, there are some portions of a full MiNT setup that might not be included in the EasyMiNT distribution for legal

reasons...but EasyMiNT is very good about providing directions that may tell you where and how to obtain these 'optional bits'.

5. In English please! What does EasyMiNT do for me?

EasyMiNT, first will give you some documents to READ, and some things to do manually to prepare your system for installation of a unix workstation. Then, it will walk you through a series of prompted questions which basically do the following:

- a. Prepare the hard disk partition for the unix side of your installation.
- b. Set up some basic things like your hostname, root password, timezone, superuser account, etc....
- c. Untar the distribution and put the relevant files and programs in the proper file-system.

The most tricky part of getting a unix workstation going are the various options, loggers, and servers you want started and configured during the 'boot' process. These files are going to be found in the /etc/ directory on your new unix partition. EasyMiNT takes most of the nightmare out of working with these numerous configuration files and scripts. EasyMiNT provides very solid groundwork here...and most of the etc files are well documented so you can figure things out as you need them.

EasyMiNT has different 'parts'. You can install one, two, or all of those you feel you will need. (Given you have a high end system...I recommend grabbing everything available and installing it all in the beginning.)

The 'Basic' setup, will set up your hard disk partition and install the general utilities needed to work with the file system, edit text files, and launch binaries. Examples are...your command prompt shells, commands like cd (change directory), ls (list files), rm (delete a file), ln (make a symbolic link for a file), more (read a text file), and so on. You're also likely to get a variety of standard tools for dealing with text files, email (on disk anyway), and newsgroups.

The "MiNT-NET" part of the package installs the networking bits. If you intend to go online at all you'll need this. Obviously, if you're building a computer network...you'll need this.

The "Compiler" option installs compilers and libraries for making or porting in your own code (many unix utilities are distributed in source form only...with a simple install script that checks out your OS, system, etc...and attempts to compile what you need jonnny on the spot). As the development of MiNT and the various compiler libraries progress...you'll find more and more unix (platform independent) packages that compile and WORK with no atari specific tweaks/changes at all! If you have a TT, Falcon, or other Atari that's pretty zippy on speed and can take extra memory....definitely grab this! If you're installing to a low end machine with low memory conditions...well...it's best to find precompiled versions of utilities/applications in my opinion.

There might also be packages you can add on such as Xwin 11, which is a Graphical User Interface for unix workstations. If you've got the drive space....might as well go ahead and get it :)

6. Do I need a multitasking aware GEM/AES?

I highly recommend it. XAES, MyAES, N_AES, and Geneva are examples. In general, you set up your preferred GEM/AES according to its instructions.

Boot your system...log in as superuser, and launch the aes you intend to use from the login shell. The same applies for your choice of desktop (TaraDesk, Thing, Jeenie, etc)."

Mark continues:

"Easymint will need to be customized to get this configuration for you. It'll probably install an older kernel and no aes (login prompt instead) there you can learn about the system and customize it. A linux background helps."

Ronald Hall asks for help with a RAM problem with his CT60:

"Well, I think I'm experiencing the inferior RAM card/SIMM problem with my CT60 equipped Falcon.

Running in '030 mode, the Thing desktop, 640x480-256 colors, looks great. No problems.

Running with the CT60 on, same setup, I get fuzzy, funny colors along the top edges of all icons, desktop and window.

Running with the CT60 on, same setup, and Thing running under MINT/N.aes 2.0, I get the same effect, plus a pixel block left in the menus whenever the mouse is there. Also, the mouse pointer starts out invisible, and once I move it, it becomes visible again. Its unstable as well - I can go to Configuration under Thing, and Thing immediately crashes back to N.aes.

Is there a definitive way of telling whether its the SIMM or not? I've got a stock 4 meg Atari memory board, and a Wizztronics 14 meg board. It does this with both.

I do get a "keyboard" failure message with every boot up with the CT60. I'm using the DEKA interface.

I'm using 60ns, 2 cls, 256 meg ram, by Crucial in the CT60, and this is with the "no solder" installation. Temp is staying around 32C, so I don't think thats a problem."

Coda tells Ronald:

"Are you using the F030 boost on the CT60? If so what speed are you clocking the mobo at? If you get these problems with the boost turned off then its probably not your RAM, I would suspect a faulty videl chip. Ask Rodolphe, he should know straight away.

The keyboard failure message is irrelevant. I and many others get it also."

Ronald tells Coda:

"Argh. I don't know what happened Coda, but this post is a repeat from 1-2 months ago. I'm completely at a loss as to how it appeared in this newsgroup again. I did not send it again.

The culprit turned out to be NVDI. I had it disabled in my AUTO folder when I was trying to track down various problems when I first installed my CT60. Once I re-enabled it, everything was fine."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Nintendo Sells 500,000 DS Handhelds in First Week

Nintendo Co. Ltd. sold 500,000 Nintendo DS video game devices during the first week of sales in U.S. stores for the new handheld featuring two screens for game playing, the Japanese game maker said on Wednesday.

During the week of the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, the start of the peak holiday shopping season, Nintendo said DS sales were "moving faster than anticipated" and predicted that initial North American supply will be "depleted within days."

The device, about the size of a paperback book, features two screens - one of which is touch-sensitive - two slots for different kinds of games and two types of wireless connections. It launched on Nov. 21 and sells for about \$150.

Nintendo reiterated that it expects to sell 1 million Nintendo DS units in North America by the end of 2004. Nintendo has already said it will fall well short of demand in Japan, where the DS launches early in December.

Demand was also strong for Nintendo's older hand-held systems, Game Boy

Advance, during the past week, with 800,000 units sold.

Nintendo dominates the handheld market, but faces a significant challenge in early 2005 in Sony Corp.'s PlayStation Portable, or PSP.

The PSP, due in March, is designed to play movies and music as well as games, and will sell for around the same price as Nintendo's DS.

Video Games Teach More Than Hand-Eye Coordination

Video games, often maligned as having little or no redeeming value, are becoming a way for firefighters, soldiers, currency traders and college administrators to hone their skills.

Although entertaining shoot-'em-ups like Microsoft Corp.'s "Halo 2" still dominate the \$10 billion video game industry, a new breed of designer is crafting programs that teach more than just hand-eye coordination.

"Serious games" demonstrating everything from flying a jet plane to negotiating a hostage crisis are used to train workers who can't afford to slip up on the job.

Firefighters can use "HazMat:Hotzone"

(<http://www.etc.cmu.edu/projects/hazmat>) to learn how to respond to a chemical-weapons attack, George Soros wannabes can learn the ins and outs of currency trading with Forex Trader

(<http://www.inusa.com/tour/forex.htm>), and college administrators can use Virtual U (<http://www.virtual-u.org>) to wrestle with angry professors and meddlesome state legislators.

Developers say serious games are especially effective for younger workers who have grown up with "Madden Football" and "Grand Theft Auto," but designers need to incorporate the irresistible appeal of these mainstream hits in order to keep participants engaged.

"Without addiction, you're out of business," said Pentagon consultant Jim Dunnigan at a recent conference. "Serious games have to attain their addiction from the inherently addictive elements of the job."

The U.S. military is by far the largest buyer of game simulations, accounting for roughly half of the \$20 million to \$40 million market.

But Dunnigan and other industry boosters say these games could soon command a significant chunk of the \$100 billion corporate and industrial training industry as the level of technological sophistication increases.

"Gaming only in a few years has hit a level of ubiquity and visual capability where people are going, 'Wow, we can do some real cool stuff,'" said Ben Sawyer, president of Portland, Maine, consulting firm Digitalmill Inc.

"We're certainly not going to look like 'Doom'," he said, "but by using game talent, we're going to make it as fun as we can."

America's Army (<http://www.americasarmy.com>) harnesses state-of-the-art game play to win new recruits for the U.S. Army, taking players from the rifle range to bombed-out desert cities. It ranks as one of the most

popular online games, with more than 4 million registered players.

Other military games focus on equally important survival skills, like Arabic language and etiquette. Users of the Rapid Tactical Language Training System can stumble through conversations with animated computer characters, rather than actual Iraqi citizens who might take offense at the wrong hand gesture.

"Instead of shooting people, you're talking to them and trying to win their trust," said Hannes Vilhjalmsson, a research scientist at the University of Southern California's Information Sciences Institute who helped develop the game.

Will Interactive Inc.'s releases (<http://www.willinteractive.com>) focus on leadership skills, putting players in situations where there is no clear right or wrong answer. Players must decide what to do if they don't have enough chemical suits for their troops, how to get a wounded soldier to safety, or how to defuse a tense hostage situation.

Realism is key to the games' effectiveness, CEO Sharon Sloane said: "Until you engage someone emotionally as well as cognitively, you cannot effect behavior change."

One way to do this is to put the action where the players are. Some researchers are ditching virtual reality for the real world.

One project at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology challenged participants to stop a biological attack spreading rapidly across campus. Using Internet-connected handheld computers, players could determine who was "infected" and search for vaccines to stop the spread of the virus.

In Zurich, Switzerland, students at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology used handheld computers to find an imaginary bomb that had been planted on campus, but things turned ugly when they locked up other players suspected of sabotaging their progress.

There is such a thing as too much realism, said Steffen Walz, the game's designer.

"I think people will start playing games where they can not tell anymore whether they are part of the game or not," he said, "and we have to think about ways to prevent that."

Missouri Pulls Video Games From Prison

Missouri's most violent criminals can no longer play video games that simulate murders, carjackings and the killing of police officers, a decision reached after prison officials were told about the content.

"We didn't closely review these," Dave Dormire, superintendent of the Jefferson City Correctional Center, told The Kansas City Star. "We were told these games had more like cartoon violence."

The Star reported Thursday the state's new maximum-security prison pulled dozens of violent Sony PlayStation 2 games from its recreation center on Wednesday, after officials were alerted to their content by a reporter. Inmates had been using them for months.

In fact, the prison's PlayStation offerings included one of the most violent games on the market, "Hitman: Contracts," in which players use everything from meat hooks to silencer-equipped pistols to carry out brutal contract killings.

In all, 35 of the facility's more than 80 games were removed. Others remain, including science fiction and sports games.

The games were paid for from inmates' purchases - mostly of snacks - at the prison canteen. The canteen generates up to \$20,000 monthly and a committee of corrections officials, prison staffers and several inmates decides how to spend it.

Much of the cash is used for weightlifting and exercise equipment. Video games are a new purchase in Jefferson City; prison officials say other facilities have done the same, though it doesn't appear to be the norm.

"It has a good effect on helping us run the prison and make sure they're busy and not trying to work on ways to escape or harm others," Dormire said. "That's kind of our bottom line - public safety."

Some corrections experts were shocked that violent games would be allowed in the hands of violent prisoners.

Jacqueline Helfgott, a professor at Seattle University who has studied the effects of violent movies and video games on criminal behavior, said such media can have a negative effect on inmates.

"You get people in a maximum-security prison who have already gone over the line," she said. "They're not afraid to engage in violence, unlike the nerd sitting in front of his computer."

Jim Houston, a professor of criminal justice at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Mich., agreed.

"These kinds of games reinforce a criminal lifestyle that caused them to get into prison in the first place," Houston said.

Mary Still, a spokeswoman for Gov. Bob Holden, said the governor believes violent games are inappropriate for prisoners. The governor does not oppose nonviolent video games for inmates, but says they should not come at taxpayer expense.

The \$128 million Jefferson City Correctional Center opened in September to replace the 170-year-old Missouri State Penitentiary. It has 1,996 beds.

Atari Appoints James Caparro President and Chief Executive Officer

Atari, Inc., a leader in interactive entertainment, has appointed entertainment industry veteran James Caparro President and Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately, it was announced today by Bruno Bonnell, Chairman and Chief Creative Officer of the Company. Mr. Caparro, who has been a Member of Atari's Board of Directors since February 2002, assumes the responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer previously held by Mr. Bonnell.

Mr. Caparro assumes overall executive management of Atari's global operations, and he will work closely with Mr. Bonnell to chart the Company's strategic course.

As Chief Creative Officer, Mr. Bonnell, who is widely regarded as a pioneer of the interactive entertainment industry, will oversee Atari's creative direction and planning for the next stages of technological advancement in gaming.

A seasoned and accomplished executive, Mr. Caparro brings to Atari nearly 30 years of professional experience within the entertainment industry, including more than a decade as CEO at the helm of three prestigious global organizations: Warner Music Group's WEA; Universal Music's Island Def Jam Music Group; and PolyGram's PolyGram Group Distribution. Under the tenure of his leadership, each of those companies recorded significant growth and improved profitability.

"Jim's track record is impeccable and we are thrilled to have an executive of his caliber and reputation leading Atari," said Mr. Bonnell. "Jim has spent his career in mass market entertainment companies, and over the last two years, as a member of our Board, he has clearly demonstrated a shared passion and vision for what Atari can be. His managerial prowess and first-hand operational expertise make him the ideal person to lead Atari's next chapter of growth."

Mr. Bonnell continued, "With Jim taking over as CEO, we strengthen Atari's present and future. As he runs our operations on a day-to-day basis, I will be able to focus my time and energies on our long-term creative opportunities in terms of both content and delivery. The next several years will bring extraordinary changes to our industry and this move insures that Atari will be a significant force both today and tomorrow."

"I couldn't be more thrilled to be joining the Company at this time," said Mr. Caparro. "Atari's reputation as an innovative, vibrant and exciting brand is more than our history, it's our future. The challenges we face are opportunities, which if fully exploited, will catapult Atari to the next level, driving demand for our products, increasing market share, and creating greater shareholder value."

Mr. Caparro continued, "I've had the pleasure of working with Bruno for more than two years as an Atari Board Member, and I not only share his vision for what this Company can become, but I also share his determination to see that vision realized. We have an evolutionary revolution ahead of us...small but dramatic steps that lead to dynamic and lasting change."

From September 2002 through 2003, Mr. Caparro was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of WEA, the company responsible for the sales, marketing, packaging, manufacturing, and distribution of music, video and other intellectual property controlled by Warner Music Group (WMG). In this capacity, he oversaw six operating companies, spanning marketing, distribution and manufacturing, among other business lines.

Previously, Mr. Caparro spent four years at Universal Music Group as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Island Def Jam Music Group, a company he founded through the integration of 14 record labels, including Mercury Records, Island Records and Def Jam Recordings.

From 1988 through 1998, Mr. Caparro held several senior management positions within PolyGram, Inc., including six years as President and Chief Executive Officer of PolyGram Group Distribution and its divisions:

Distribution, Video, Merchandising, PolyMedia, New Media, and Business Development.

Mr. Caparro began his career in 1973 at Sony Music where, over the course of 16 years, he held various positions in Sales and Marketing at Epic Records and CBS Records, and in Human Resources and Administration at CBS, Inc.

Mr. Caparro holds a B.A. degree from William Paterson College. He is a Member of the Board of Directors of Prana Foundation, the T.J. Martell Foundation, and the National Association of Recording Merchandisers (NARM). In 2001, he was named "Chief Executive Officer of the Year" by S.I.N. Magazine, and he received NARM's "Distributor of the Year" Award for five consecutive years (1993-1997).

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Bush Signs Internet Access Tax Ban Into Law

President Bush signed a bill that renews a ban on Internet access taxes on Friday amid praise from lawmakers and trade groups who said the measure would encourage more people to sign up for high-speed broadband service.

Bush said repeatedly on the campaign trail this year that a ban on access taxes is crucial to reach his goal of universal broadband access by 2007, enabling more Internet users to download video, music and other bandwidth-intensive content.

The ban on access taxes, in place since 1998, expired more than a year ago when congressional lawmakers could not agree whether to make it permanent or merely extend it for three years.

Backers at the time warned that Internet use could suffer if tax-happy states imposed new surcharges on the monthly fees that Internet providers like America Online Inc. charge their customers.

But some senators said the ban would require states to raise taxes in other areas to make up for the millions of dollars they stand to lose as telephone service and other taxable activities migrate to the Internet.

No states or local governments imposed new Internet taxes during the year the ban was not in effect.

Congress approved a compromise last month that extends the ban until 2007 and extends it to cover broadband service. Existing broadband taxes will be gradually phased out.

"It's an important step forward in bridging the economic digital divide," said Sen. George Allen (news, bio, voting record), a Virginia Republican

and a bill sponsor who attended the signing ceremony at the White House complex.

"This measure will help make sure for those of lower income and those who live in small towns and rural areas that they can get connected more easily to broadband," he said.

Broadband costs between \$30 and \$50 per month, compared with as little as \$9.95 per month for regular dial-up access.

Roughly 25 percent of U.S. adults have broadband access, up from 14 percent in 2002, according to the nonprofit Pew Internet and American Life Project. Overall Internet use during the same period has held steady at around 60 percent.

Several technology-industry trade groups also praised Bush's action.

SCO Site Attacked Again

The SCO Group Inc.'s Web site has once again been attacked, but this time hackers didn't just target the site for a distributed-denial-of-service attack-they defaced the Web site itself.

The site was altered in at least two ways sometime during the Thanksgiving weekend. The most obvious attack was on SCO's home page, where a banner image for SCO Web seminars has been replaced with a JPEG image that says, "We own all your code. Pay us all your money." In the background, a woman appears to be writing "realloc(", a common C language function used to change the size of a memory block. The image was still on the site at the time this report was written.

In addition to the main SCO Web site, the Lindon, Utah-based Unix company's alternative sites, www.thescogroup.com and www.caldera.com, were also showing the hacked image.

Earlier, the site had been hacked so that the page "Red Hat v. SCO," which gives SCO's side of its case with Red Hat Inc., was altered to "SCO vs. World." It included the following text: "Recently we found parts of our code in almost all Microsoft(R) software. We want to bring an action against Microsoft(R) and our legal department is working on that. - Currently we are checking older MS-DOS sources. It's obvious, that all while (1){ do_something; } and for (i = 0; i

This page was corrected by early Monday morning. Sometime soon after, the site was again cracked and the bogus JPEG was put in place.

Prior to the hacks, the SCO site appeared to have been under attack off and on since 9 a.m. EST Saturday, according to Internet research company Netcraft Ltd. of Bath, England. The SCO site was offline at least three times during the holiday weekend, according to Netcraft.

Earlier this year and late last year, SCO suffered multiple DDoS attacks. These attacks were caused by the Windows-based MyDoom virus (dubbed Novarg.A by Symantec Corp. and MiMail.R by Trend Micro Inc.). With the SCO Web site completely swamped, the company resorted at that time to launching a new site, www.thescogroup.com.

No one then, or now, has claimed responsibility for those attacks or the current series of attacks. SCO offered a reward of \$250,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual or individuals responsible for creating MyDoom.

As for this latest attack, SCO public relations director Blake Stowell said, "On November 28 and 29, The SCO Group's web site experienced two intrusions by a malicious hacker that temporarily altered two web pages. The company quickly took steps to bring the web site back to normal, and removed the vulnerability that was identified as the way in which the hacker altered the site's content. The company believes that it has effectively addressed the issue to avoid further unauthorized intrusions of this kind."

Ohio Lawmakers OK Bill That Sends Spammers to Jail

Ohio legislators sent an anti-spam bill to Gov. Bob Taft on Tuesday, with the aim of joining other U.S. states that have laws that put people who flood the Web with junk e-mail behind bars.

The bill, first introduced in January and already approved by the state Senate, overwhelmingly passed the Ohio House of Representatives on Tuesday, said an aide to Rep. Kathleen Walcher, who co-sponsored the bill.

Taft could not be immediately reached for comment. One industry source said the Ohio governor is expected to sign the bipartisan anti-spam bill.

If signed into law, it would outlaw Internet ads that are deceptive or misleading and ban people from setting up false accounts to send spam, the junk e-mail that clogs consumers' online mailboxes and taxes the resources of Internet service providers.

The measure would also allow the state attorney general to impose criminal and civil sanctions against spammers.

The worst violators could face a minimum of six months in jail as well as fines of \$25,000 per violation, or \$2 to \$8 per violating e-mail. Their computer equipment could be confiscated, and Internet providers could sue for damages.

AOL spokesman Nicholas Graham called the Ohio bill "one of the strongest anti-spam measures in the country." Graham said the bill is aimed only at the worst offenders who use fraud, deception and evasion to get their messages in front of consumers.

"This is not meant to snag grandma sending her oatmeal cookie recipe," he said.

AOL, a unit of Time Warner Inc., said it worked closely with the bill's sponsors.

The Ohio bill was modeled after the federal CAN-SPAM Act but adds tougher penalties. Maryland has adopted an anti-spam law with criminal penalties and Virginia recently used its state law to send a North Carolina man to prison for sending hundreds of thousands of spam e-mail messages.

Microsoft Sues More Spammers

Citing the CAN-SPAM anti-spam law's "brown-paper wrapper" rule, Microsoft has filed seven lawsuits against spammers who allegedly sent messages containing sexually explicit content.

The law's provisions require sexually oriented e-mail solicitations to include the label "Sexually-Explicit:" in both the subject line and the viewable area of an e-mail message.

The suits have been filed as "John Doe" actions, said Microsoft's Internet safety enforcement attorney Aaron Kornblum, which means the company does not know the identity of the defendants, but will after the subpoena process.

"We want to know who's hitting the 'send' button on this stuff," Kornblum told NewsFactor.

In addition to CAN-SPAM violations, the spammers also are breaking laws outlined in the Commercial Electronic Mail Act, including using compromised computers around the world to route spam e-mail messages.

The seven defendants were chosen based on numerous factors, said Kornblum. Microsoft considered customer complaints, but also looked at the large quantity of sexually explicit e-mail sent to Microsoft employees.

"We are constantly reviewing that mail to look for patterns and to assemble the information into a case we can pursue," Kornblum said.

Although Microsoft has filed lawsuits against different types of spammers, Kornblum noted that sexually explicit e-mail is particularly offensive to Internet users.

"This type of mail is a threat to younger Internet users, and that's why we're focusing on it in this latest round of enforcement suits," he said.

Beyond shutting down the spammers in question, Microsoft is hoping to send a message to other senders of unsolicited mail that there are consequences to their messages, including financial penalties and even jail time, in some cases.

The recent round of lawsuits brings Microsoft's litigation tally against spammers to 86 in the U.S., and 120 worldwide. Pursuing spammers through the courts is expensive, Kornblum said, but worth every penny.

Lawsuits are one part of Microsoft's aggressive anti-spam strategy, according to Kornblum. Other methods to decrease unsolicited mail include working with Congress to draft new legislation and creating new tools to block spammers.

"Spam detracts from the online experience," said Kornblum. "We think it's a serious issue, and we'll keep up our efforts until spam is gone."

The U.S. Supreme Court said on Friday it would decide what regulations should apply to high-speed broadband Internet service offered by cable companies like Time Warner Inc., a key case that could decide whether such lines must be opened to competitors.

The Federal Communications Commission ruled in 2002 that cable broadband was an information service and therefore free from most regulations that apply to traditional telephone services, which includes broadband.

But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit overturned that decision, relying on its previous ruling that broadband via cable companies had a telecommunications component and should be subject to stricter regulations.

The high court will likely hear arguments in March, with a decision due by the end of June.

Broadband, also offered by telephone carriers, is catching on among many U.S. consumers who want faster Internet service to, among other things, play music and videos. About 30 million Americans subscribe to the service, but the United States lags about a dozen countries in deployment.

President Bush pledged during his campaign that he would push for universal access to broadband by 2007.

The FCC argued the appeals court incorrectly overrode the agency and its expertise to oversee and regulate the telecommunications and media industry. It has tried to limit regulations on the service as a way to promote deployment.

"High-speed Internet connections are not telephones," said FCC Chairman Michael Powell. "The 9th Circuit's decision would have grave consequences for the future and availability of high-speed Internet connections in this country."

But independent Internet service providers and public interest groups have worried that, without some safeguards by the FCC, consumers would have limited choices for broadband service providers.

EarthLink Inc., the No. 4 U.S. Internet service provider and a supporter of tougher cable rules, said that, despite the high court's decision to hear the case, it anticipated the appeals court would not be overturned.

"This will settle the matter once and for all and finally give cable modem users a choice in high-speed Internet providers," said Dave Baker, vice president for law and public policy at EarthLink.

Screensaver To Go On The Offensive Against Spam Websites

Internet users fed up with spam can go on the offensive by downloading a screensaver aimed at hitting junkmailers in the pocket, Net portal Lycos said.

The screensaver - "Make Love Not Spam" - available from Lycos Europe requests data from websites that are mentioned in bulk mailings.

If thousands of screensaver users sign up, the websites' servers will be

running at nearly full tilt, Frank Legerland, a spokesman for Lycos Europe, based in Guetersloh, Germany, told AFP.

The demand will slow the websites' response and hike their bandwidth bills, yet derive no income for them because there will be no response.

Those costs may discourage the sites from hiring e-mail spammers to advertise their wares, he said.

"The aim is for a maximum reduction of 95 percent in the website's traffic, not a total shutdown," he said.

The websites have been chosen from spammers' blacklists selected by anti-spam watchdogs such as Spamcop. To make doubly sure there is no mistake, Lycos says it also checks to make sure that the sites are selling spam goods.

A complete shutdown of websites by swamping them with demand - a "distributed denial of service" - could be considered illegal in some jurisdictions.

The Lycos scheme is questioned by some Internet commentators, who worry that it will generate additional megabytes of useless traffic that could strain the Net's capacity.

"Seems Lycos may hurt not just spammers," the online news site The Register said.

Lycos Antispam Screensaver Draws Fire

A screensaver developed by Lycos Europe that gives spammers a dose of their own medicine is attracting plenty of attention, but not all of it good.

The company officially launched the "Make Love, Not Spam" screensaver Wednesday but a beta version had already been widely distributed. Offering to "spam the spammers," the screensaver works by repeatedly requesting information from Web sites advertised in spam, thereby reducing the performance of those sites.

Reports began to surface earlier this week that the Web site containing the "Make Love, Not Spam" download had been hacked, with users receiving a message reading "Yes, attacking spammers is wrong, you know this, you shouldn't be doing it. Your IP address and request has been logged and will be reported to your ISP for further action."

A Lycos Europe spokesperson says that the site has "absolutely not been hacked," however. The company was victim of a hoax, she says, and someone mocked up a screen shot of the hacked site and forwarded it via e-mail.

Although the site was inaccessible to some users Tuesday and Wednesday, the spokesperson says that this was due to "overwhelming demand" and that the company is working to rectify the situation. The screensaver has already been downloaded over 90,000 times, the spokesperson says.

She adds that the company is "well aware that it is a controversial service" and measures have been taken to defend it.

Even if the company is not currently under attack, a security expert says that Lycos Europe opened a potential Pandora's Box by deciding to take direct action against the spammers.

"This seems like a very shortsighted idea of theirs, lowering themselves to the same level as the hackers and spammers," says Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at Sophos.

There is the real danger that Lycos Europe has made itself a target for hackers, and what's more the company could be treading into a gray legal area, Cluley says.

Although the screensaver does not send spam, violating antispam laws, it could potentially violate rules against launching a denial of service attack, he says.

But Lycos Europe claims that it does not intend to actually take down the spammers' sites, just deteriorate their performance. The company is using a central database to manage the sites the screensavers are attacking and regularly takes sites out of the attack cycle to make sure that they are not entirely brought down, it says.

That aside, Cluley advises users not to use the screensaver, which could eat up company bandwidth and possibly incite the ire of hackers.

"My advice is to get a decent spam filter, and for God's sake, stop buying things advertised in spam," he says.

First Look: Netscape's New Browser

Netscape's latest browser, available in a limited-release beta version, puts you in control. It lets you establish security settings site-by-site, manage multiple open pages more easily than you could with any previous browser, and - for sites that require Internet Explorer - decide for yourself whether to view the page in a Netscape-style window or an IE-style window.

The new browser is available only to preregistered beta testers; the registration period has closed. It is officially named version 0.5.6+, and is based on Firefox version 0.9.3. (Mozilla released version 1 of the Firefox browser last month.)

The browser boasts a revamped look since its most recent previous update, Netscape version 7.2, which was released last August. The Netscape banner and the toolbar area feature shades of green and a corrugated design. The Standard toolbar (File, Edit, View, and so on) is located on the top right of the screen next to the minimize/maximize/close buttons rather than on the top left.

The redesigned navigation toolbar features icons with drop-down menus for managing pop-up blocking; choosing Passcard options; handling automatic form filling; clearing the history, cookies, and cache; and printing. You can't drag the address bar out of this toolbar or resize it the way you can in IE and other browsers, but this isn't a major flaw.

The optional Personal toolbar shows you local weather (based on the zip code you entered during program installation) and news feeds in various

categories: headlines, money, sports, entertainment, and Slashdot. The toolbar is easy to customize: To add a component, just drag it from the Customize dialog box to the toolbar and let go. Likewise, you can remove a newsfeed or other toolbar item by dragging it from the toolbar back to the Customize dialog box. Or right-click the toolbar and uncheck Personal Toolbar to make it go away and free up space in the main browser window.

The Netscape Sidebar pops open along the left side of the browser window when you click its icon. Like previous versions of Netscape, the update offers you a choice of tabs. (Tabs let you open multiple Web pages and switch between them with ease rather than requiring a separate browser window for each page, as IE does.) The default selections are Search, Bookmarks, and Latest News. Other choices include What's Related, History, Stocks, CNN, and MapQuest. Or click Customize to add other tabs for business, international, travel, music, TV, real estate, and other special interests. You can even create your own tab with links to any sites or files on your local machine.

I prefer to browse without the sidebar, to maximize viewable area. This puts Netscape's tabs in the top left, under the Personal Toolbar. Anybody who has struggled to manage multiple open Internet Explorer windows will appreciate Netscape's tabs, which make moving between several open Web pages a snap. Tabs aren't new, nor are they specific to Netscape, but this beta takes them to a new level of functionality. The drop-down menu for each tab lets you control the security setting, cookies, pop-ups, and other options for that site.

For sites that require IE, you have the option of displaying the site as Internet Explorer. For example, you can't get Microsoft's Windows Update to work in any browser other than IE. With this new Netscape function, you can update Windows or access these IE-specific features without having to switch browsers. This is possible because the browser uses both the Gecko engine of Firefox and Microsoft's own Internet Explorer engine.

There are also new drop-down options for closing tabs. You can close all tabs for that site, all tabs to the left or right of the one currently displayed, just the active tab, or all but the active tab. Not even Firefox has tab options to compare with this.

This is a beta product for sure. In the first few minutes I spent using the new browser, the text overlapped on one of the Netscape site's own pages, something I haven't seen in any browser in a long time.

Previous versions of Netscape have conveniently permitted pop-up ads for AOL and other Time Warner properties to slip unfettered through the browser's pop-up blocker. The new pop-up control options in this browser may make it easier for people to block even AOL-approved ads.

There's a good chance, however, that AOL will find similar ways to monetize this browser, so it's far too soon to pass judgment. Still, a quick first look indicates that the next Netscape browser will be well worth taking for a test run, once it's available to the public.

Mozilla Previews Thunderbird E-Mail App

The Mozilla Foundation has unveiled the most complete preview version yet of its stand-alone e-mail application.

The release comes only weeks after the launch of its Firefox browser version 1.0, and is part of the open source software project's continuing efforts to chip away market share from Microsoft's dominate Internet Explorer.

The release candidate of Thunderbird 1.0 e-mail management software, launched Wednesday, is being positioned as similar to Microsoft's free end-user application Outlook Express but without the user hassles of dealing with advertisements and spam.

Before the official release of Thunderbird 1.0, slated for December 7, the group is offering the preview version of the free client for last-minute testing. Based on the Mozilla codebase, Thunderbird 1.0 works with most operating systems including Windows, Linux (news - web sites), and Macintosh, the group says.

The Mozilla Foundation has said in the past that it aims to capture between 10 percent and 12 percent of the Web browser market by the end of next year. It has already been able to eke out a 3 percent share through its preview versions of Firefox, though Microsoft's IE continues to hoard as much as 95 percent of the market, according to figures from WebSideStory.

Thunderbird is part of that overall effort, although Outlook Express is far from Mozilla's only competition among e-mail clients, with Yahoo (Yahoo Mail), Google (Gmail), and Microsoft (Hotmail) all offering popular and free Web-based e-mail services.

Mozilla believes it can woo users over to Thunderbird with features such as the ability to choose between three message views and to customize toolbar buttons, an integrated Usenet newsgroup reader, and security features such as not allowing scripts to run by default.

The Mozilla Foundation, based in Mountain View, California, is a nonprofit organization created in July 2003 to support the Mozilla open source software project. Mozilla was originally created at Netscape Communications in 1998, which was since acquired by media conglomerate Time Warner.

The new Thunderbird release candidate can be downloaded online.

EBay Adds 'Want It Now' Feature

EBay Inc. has added a new "Want it Now" feature for people to request exactly what they want on the online marketplace, a spokesman said on Friday.

"It's an enhancement to search," eBay spokesman Hani Durzy said of the new feature that mimics traditional classified ads.

The new function comes amid the all-important holiday shopping season that contributes to what is traditionally the strongest financial quarter for the No. 1 U.S. shopping site. EBay usually has about 30 million items listed at any given time.

"Want it Now" appears on the main eBay page under the heading "Specialty Sites." Shoppers can post their requests for specific items. Sellers can browse those postings and contact potential buyers with information about

items that may match their requirements. Sales follow eBay's normal procedures.

Among the 2,700-plus items wanted are a 1976 Port Chester, New York, High School yearbook; antique wood stove parts; red t-shirts with the blurb, "Old Men are Good Lovers Too"; and a fully-leased strip mall in the San Francisco Bay area.

EBay recently acquired 25 percent of local online classifieds company Craigslist.org. In November, eBay bought Marktplaats.nl, the biggest Dutch classified advertising Web site for about \$290 million in cash. The online auctioneer in April paid almost \$150 million for Mobile.de, one of the leading vehicle classifieds Web sites in Germany.

Fast Internet Service for The People

For the millions of people who cannot afford high-speed Internet access, some local officials think they've hit on the answer: Build government-owned networks to provide service at rates below what big telecommunications companies charge.

From San Francisco to St. Cloud, Fla., an estimated 200 communities are toying with community-owned networks, sparking a battle with cable and telephone companies over how public, or private, access to the Internet should be.

The companies are lobbying furiously to block such plans, fearful that their businesses would be hurt. Their efforts most recently paid off Tuesday night in Pennsylvania, where a new law bans local governments from creating their own networks without first giving the primary local phone company the chance to provide service.

Consumer advocates denounce the new Pennsylvania law. They say it amounts to governments now needing a permission slip from entrenched monopolies to put a vital economic and educational tool within everyone's reach.

For them, government has a long history of providing essential public services, such as national highways or electricity in rural areas.

"The Internet . . . is a true global public utility," said Jeffrey Chester, director of the Center for Digital Democracy, an advocate for consumer rights online. "We should be trying to provide it for free."

At least, they argue, community networks should be able to give the large companies some competition. In a February survey conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 24 percent of U.S. adults said they had high-speed Internet access at home. About half of those had incomes of more than \$75,000 a year.

Harold J. Feld, associate director of the Media Access Project, a consumer-media advocacy group, said a phone or cable company could always come in and provide a wireless network, competing on price and service with any municipal offering.

"But who gets to decide what municipalities can do?" Feld said. "Will it be corporations?"

In some cases, governments acted out of concern that spotty service from commercial providers in rural areas might be inhibiting economic growth. Allegany County in western Maryland is building a high-speed wireless network that will be available for homes and businesses.

Companies such as Verizon Communications Inc., which helped shape the Pennsylvania law, argue that telecommunications firms would have little incentive to build networks if they have to compete with government-subsidized service.

Verizon spokesman Eric Rabe noted that the company is under state mandate to deploy high-speed access to customers in all of its Pennsylvania territory by 2015.

"If we should be asked to do that, we should be able to make a business of it," he said, and not compete with governments that can borrow money to build out a system more cheaply and can tax residents to pay for the service.

The new law forces local governments to give the local phone carrier first shot at providing wireless service if a locality intends to charge for it. If the service is going to be free, the law does not apply.

But Beth McConnell, director of the Pennsylvania Public Interest Research Group, said it is unreasonable to think that a government would be able to offer service for nothing.

In last-minute negotiations before the bill was signed late Tuesday by Gov. Edward G. Rendell (D), the law was changed to allow systems operating before January 2006 to proceed.

That language, and a separate deal with Verizon, will enable Philadelphia to move forward with plans for a citywide wireless network, the largest such experiment in the country.

"Just like roads and transportation were keys to our past, a digital infrastructure and wireless technology are keys to our future," Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street said in September when he announced the plan.

Although residents would still have to own computers, the typical \$30 to \$50 monthly cost of high-speed Internet access from commercial services would be reduced. No details have been decided.

In the borough of Kutztown, Pa., local officials built a fiber-optic network in 2000, following the path of the power lines that also are owned by the town.

Today, Internet service at speeds faster than those generally provided by phone and cable companies is available to residents and businesses beginning at \$15 a month. The system also provides cable television service. More than 500 residents take advantage of the system.

Frank P. Caruso, the town's director of information technology, said he feels sorry for communities that will not be able to meet the 2006 deadline and thus be forced to deal with Verizon first.

"They don't realize that their throats have just been cut," Caruso said. "It's almost like Verizon is Big Brother." Caruso said that after the town began offering cable television service, the private provider dropped its

price by 40 percent to compete.

In signing the legislation, Rendell said that he was concerned about the new restrictions on public networks but that other parts of the bill involving telecommunications were too important to derail.

Among them are financial incentives for Verizon to accelerate plans to expand broadband access around the state.

The law will be closely watched around the country, where phone and cable companies are pressuring state legislatures to limit what municipalities can do. According to MuniWireless.com, an online newsletter that tracks community-based wireless projects, 14 states have passed some type of legislation limiting what municipalities can do.

In Illinois, meanwhile, SBC Communications Inc. and Comcast Corp. teamed up twice to defeat ballot measures that would have allowed three towns to create a fiber-optic network to provide telecommunications and cable television services.

'Blog' Tops Online Dictionary List

"Blog," short for "Weblog," tops the list of 10 most-requested definitions, Merriam-Webster said.

According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, a blog is "a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer."

The recent U.S. presidential election was notable for the prominent use of blogs, as people debated the merits of the two main candidates.

But blogs are not just used for political purposes - they are often used by people as public diaries, to record aspects of their life.

In the UK, the Guardian, one of the leading British newspapers, regularly features blogs in its online edition.

"While most of our online dictionary lookups are for slightly difficult but still generic non-specialized vocabulary, it does sometimes happen that words in the headlines so grab people's attention that they become a most frequently looked-up word," John M. Morse, president and publisher of Merriam-Webster, says in a statement.

"That is what occurred in this year's election cycle, with voluminous hits for words like 'incumbent,' 'electoral,' 'partisan,' and, of course, our number one word of the year, 'blog.'"

Initially, people were requesting a definition for blog, and the word was not even officially in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the company admitted.

"Most of the words in the top 10 list that people look up are in our dictionary," Arthur Bicknell, senior publicist at Merriam-Webster, told NewsFactor. "But 'blog' was not in the dictionary, as it was scheduled to be included in the 2005 annual updates of Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary due out early next year. So our lexicographers placed a

definition of 'blog' on our Web site."

The 2004 Merriam-Webster's words of the year list is based on users' anonymous hits to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and Online Thesaurus as well as lookups on Merriam-Webster Collegiate.com.

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